



LP
F
5012

1834

B3

A D D R E S S

TO THE

REFORMED PRESBYTERIANS

AND

OTHER CHRISTIANS

IN

BRITISH AMERICA.

EDINBURGH :

PRINTED BY ANDREW JACK AND CO.

233. HIGH STREET.

1834.

F1028

1834 B3

ADDRESS.

DEAR BRETHREN,—The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland, in sending out one of their number to preach to you the everlasting gospel, wish you grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

By the divine mercy, the Church, under the care of this Synod, continues to enjoy a plentiful supply of gospel ordinances at home. The doctrines of salvation are preached in her assemblies every Lord's day; and at stated seasons, or as occasion may require, the solemn seals of the covenant are dispensed. Divine truth is inculcated on the minds of the young from the years of childhood; sinners are called to repentance; and the children of God are edified and matured for their heavenly rest.

Both the Synod, and the Church under its care, are fully aware, that it would be undutiful and ungrateful to the great Bestower of these inestimable privileges, to be insensible to the destitution of their fellow-men, who are either wholly deprived of them, or whose supply is lamentably disproportioned to their necessities. We believe that a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, however dreadful in any community, is yet a calamity of small account, when compared with this moral and spiritual famine "of hearing the word of the Lord." It is evident,—from the solemn command of the exalted Redeemer,—that wherever the gospel comes, it imposes an obligation on those who receive it, to impart it to others who may be in want of it. The *privilege* and the *obligation* are inseparable. And universal experience proves, that whenever a sinner cordially embraces the gospel, one of the first and strongest emotions which it awakens, is a desire that others may share the peace and joy which he has himself received. It would disprove our claim to genuine Christianity, did we not cherish an earnest desire to make Christ and his salvation known to our fellow sinners, to the utmost extent of our power.

It must be confessed, however, that for several ages previous to the commencement of the present century, the weight of this obligation was neither well understood, nor fully appreciated, even by reformed churches. A new era has certainly commenced. Many lofty enterprises have been projected, and some strenuous efforts have been made for extending the kingdom of Christ, both by British and American christians, within the last forty years. A few hundred missionaries have been sent out into the immense regions covered with heathen darkness; and many others are preparing to follow them; and, by the blessing of God, the power of the gospel has been again demonstrated in the darkest countries to which missionaries have been sent. The first-fruits have been gathered as a blessed earnest of a glorious harvest.

From the first formation of the Society, whose Committee sends you this Address, the views of the Synod were directed to Canada, as a most inviting field for missionary labour. It was not because that land was more destitute than many other lands, that we were desirous to make our first efforts there; but because we believed its inhabitants had

stronger claims on our christian sympathy, than any other people with whose condition we were acquainted. By numberless letters sent from all points of these vast provinces, and by the testimony of persons who had themselves visited them, and were eye-witnesses of what they related, we had learned that the religious necessities of that land were very great, and that the increase of population outruns the supply of religious instruction, in a degree that cannot easily be computed. We knew that there were vast tracts containing an ever-growing-population, that were seldom visited by any gospel minister; that there were multitudes of rising settlements, that would gladly welcome a teacher, who would shew to them the way of salvation: and that there were others of still longer standing, whose inhabitants had sunk into supineness and apathy, from which it was no easy task to awaken them; whose Sabbaths were spent in unprofitable social intercourse; in reading Newspapers, or other writings which afford no spiritual benefit to the soul; or even in vain amusements. In addition to these things, we were, from time to time, receiving letters from individuals formerly known to ourselves, containing affecting complaints about their religious privations, and renewing the Macedonian call, "Come over and help us." We were moved when they took up David's complaint, "Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar:" "when I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me,—for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise; with a multitude that kept holy day." It were difficult to say which cry was the loudest,—that of those who knew the misery of their condition and implored assistance, or the appeal made to christian benevolence by the destitution of others, who were living without warning, at a distance from God, and wholly insensible to their danger.

We have not been inattentive to the strenuous exertions that have been made, for a few years past, by some benevolent christians on this side of the Atlantic, to send you some relief; especially by a society in connection with the Church of Scotland. We rejoice in the good which that society has already effected; and in the prospect of still more extensive good, which we trust it will yet accomplish. Although not in the fellowship of that church ourselves, from which our reforming ancestors felt constrained to stand aloof at the revolution settlement, nearly 150 years ago, on grounds which we still believe to be valid grounds of separation; yet we are glad when we see her sons stirring themselves up to holy christian enterprizes, worthy of the fathers who composed the Church of Scotland in a purer and better age than our own. Knowing, as we do, the eminent worth of some of the young men recently sent out by the society just mentioned, and hoping, in the judgment of charity, that others unknown to us are of a similar character, we are happy to express our belief that they come to you "in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ," and in that view cordially wish them God speed. Had our means at all corresponded to our wishes, we should have been in the field of labour as soon as any of our christian brethren of other denominations; not as *rivals*, but as *friendly fellow-labourers* in cultivating so vast a wilderness,—happy to have the honour of bearing the humblest part in so excellent a work.

We regret deeply, that after a much longer delay than we had anticipated, we are at length able to send to you only one herald of the gospel—our dear brother M'Lachlan, whom we beg to introduce to your christian regards. His heart has long been set on missionary enterprizes; he was not only very willing to go, but very desirous of being sent to Canada, although he might readily have found a field of labour at home; and it is our hope that you will find him a faithful ambassador, in what respects the glory of his great Master, and the best interests of immortal souls. Receive him, we beseech you, in the Lord,—and esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake.

It is well remarked by an eminent living divine, that in respect to the body, and the present life, the sense of want becomes more acute in proportion to the greatness of the necessity; but that in respect to the wants of the soul, the rule is just reversed. Now, in conformity to this rule, there is reason to apprehend that the estimate which many of you form of the value of a gospel ministry, may have been materially affected by your residence in that country. We should feel happy, if any considerations we could offer to your minds, in our brief address, might prove the means of counteracting this tendency, and of exalting your views of the great leading institution of the gospel system.

When our great High Priest had completed the stupendous work of redemption, and just before his ascension into heaven, he gave a commission to his disciples to go and preach the gospel; and promised to be present with them in the prosecution of this work, "*always,—even to the end of the world.*" This promise implied, that the ordinance of preaching was a standing ordinance in his church;—that a gospel ministry should be perpetuated. And in conformity with this promise, we are further informed, that, "when he ascended up on high, he gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." You will remember the high pre-eminence which the apostles assigned to the work of preaching, over every other employment that might come into competition with it. When the work of dispensing the bounty of the church to the poor began to incroach on their time, they resigned this work into the hands of others. "It is not reason," say they, "that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." "*We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*" It may seem still more remarkable, perhaps, that the apostle Paul held the work of preaching as having higher claims on his attention, than the administration of the sacraments. This sentiment seems plainly contained in the following declaration: "for Christ sent me *not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.*" The same inspired writer assigns the reason of the supreme importance he attaches to preaching;—"it hath pleased God," he says, "by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved, it is the power of God."

The experience of all ages has shown how difficult it is,—if it be at all possible,—to preserve religion alive in any community without the Sabbath. And the difficulty of maintaining the Sabbath in any degree of efficiency, without the stated or very frequent ministrations of the gospel, is scarcely less formidable. We have cause to fear, brethren, that

these positions have been but too amply proved by your own observation and experience; and unless you have already begun to feel on your own minds the unhappy effects of long destitution, we are assured, that you will deeply deplore the want of a Sabbath, where you now sojourn; or at least the want of such Sabbaths as you had been accustomed to witness in your native land.

Some of you we have known personally and familiarly as our own brethren in the fellowship of the church. "We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company." We have been edified and comforted by the same discourses, and have sat down together at the same communion table. We cannot permit ourselves to believe, that you had then less regard for the institutions of Christ, than we had ourselves. Whether you sufficiently considered the danger of losing these privileges, when you came to the decision of placing yourselves in that distant land, it is not now our object to inquire. But we can freely make our appeal to you all, and especially to those of you whose attachment to the cause of the reformation was strongest, and whose enjoyment in the house of God, and in the fellowship of the saints was most abundant, whether the necessity and importance of a faithful administration of gospel ordinances, has not been more fully demonstrated to you by your sojourn in that country, than ever before. Whatever reception *you* may be inclined to give our young brother now sent among you,—and, we trust, the Lord will dispose your hearts to receive him as an ambassador for Christ,—we may assure you, that a feeling of deep solicitude for you and your children, had no small share in determining the Synod to make choice of Canada as the first sphere of their missionary exertions. The chief Shepherd himself evinces his compassion, by following one wandering sheep into the wilderness. And ought not we at length to explore that vast desert, into which so many from our various flocks have been wandering in succession, for many years, and where most of them, we fear, are deprived of all pastoral care. They cannot "go forth by the footsteps of the flock, nor feed their kids beside the shepherds' tents."

But we confine not our address to those who are of the same religious fellowship with ourselves. We know, that many others, whom we could not scruple to salute as christian brethren,—although not worshipping in the same societies, nor in all points holding exactly the same views with ourselves,—have transferred their abode to that country. We have here in view, chiefly those who, in common with ourselves, venerate the Church of Scotland as she appeared under the second reformation,—when she looked forth in the bloom of her youth,—the admiration of the christian world; those to whom her presbyterian form of government,—her ample and lucid exposition of the doctrines of grace, and the beautiful simplicity of her worship, together with the noble surrender she made of herself to the exalted Messiah, in a solemn covenant, still render her dear. We cannot doubt that a preacher, bringing the identical doctrines which that church embraced,—which she embodied in her incomparable standards,—and in defence of which a noble army of her martyrs laid down their lives,—would be to this class highly acceptable. Their hearts respond to the words of inspiration: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good

tidings of good ; that publisheth salvation ; that saith unto Zion, **THY GOD REIGNETH.**"

Yet, neither would we confine our friendly salutations, or our benevolent regards, to these. We know that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men, who dwell on all the face of the earth ;" and in this respect we account as *brethren* the whole human race, without reference to kindred, or country, or diversity of religious belief. Remembering that all have immortal souls,—that all are sinners, involved in the common ruin of our species,—“our hearts’ desire and prayer to God” on their behalf is, that they may speedily receive the gospel,—that they may be enlightened in the knowledge of Christ,—may come to him in humble faith,—and through the efficacy of his blood, and the prevalence of his intercession, “obtain an inheritance among all them that are sanctified by faith in him.”

In virtue of the office which we have received from the Lord Jesus, we would claim the privilege of addressing a few words of friendly counsel and exhortation to all. Many of you are rarely warned from the pulpit ; may we hope that you will yield the more attention to our brief address.

1. *We beseech you not to forget that the concerns of your souls are immensely the most important of all your concerns.* “What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” Time is short. Eternity is long. The body must in a few years see corruption, and lie down with the worms of the dust. Death spares none on account of the multitude of their secular affairs. The soul is destined to a never-ending existence. Although your outward prosperity should exceed the most sanguine expectations you ever formed ; although you could heap up gold as dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets, how utterly worthless and despicable must all this appear, when you are stretched on your last bed, should your eternal destiny be still at hazard ! Oh, then, to have a solid hope for futurity,—an interest in the unchangeable love of God,—in the salvation wrought out by Christ,—in the countless blessings of the new covenant ! In the estimate which you shall then form, how immeasurably must this transcend in value any possible outward prosperity ! Ought you not to give a decided preference during life, to that which shall be infinitely superior at the hour of death ?

2. Let it be farther considered, that while the benefits we have specified are bestowed on men most freely, and independently of all worth in the receivers ; or, to speak more correctly, notwithstanding their infinite demerit and guilt, *yet they never are conferred upon those, who, by neglecting to seek them, prove that they regard them with contempt.* “How shall they escape who neglect so great salvation.” “Strait is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life ; strive therefore to enter in at the strait gate.” The christian life is compared to a race, it is therefore necessary for us to “lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and to run with patience the race that is set before us.” It is a keen and protracted warfare, with powerful and malicious foes ; “fight therefore the good fight of faith, that ye may lay hold on eternal life.”

3. *Bear further in mind, that the eager and persevering pursuit of*

the world, proves a fatal hindrance to many, in seeking an inheritance in the heavens. Where the King of Glory makes his most sumptuous entertainment, and sends forth his servants to give the most liberal invitations, what classes of persons are they, who, "with one consent, begin to make excuse?" The persons who are immersed in the over-zealous prosecution of lawful occupations. Temptations from this source, are powerful in our own land; and notwithstanding incessant warning from the pulpit, and from the press, they prove ruinous to tens of thousands. In your country, we greatly fear, the danger is heightened, rather than diminished. The distractions arising from worldly avocations are, at least, as numerous; while the counteracting influences which our people enjoy in their religious ordinances, are to many of you, wholly inaccessible. Are not some of you already conscious of having suffered much harm and loss from this cause? You have felt the deadening effect of many years' exile from the house of God—of the want of such preaching as is suited for your edification, or your conscience can approve. The freshness and fervour of religious affection, experienced in former years, seem to be irrecoverably gone. The "godly sorrow which worketh repentance," and the "joy that passeth all understanding," are alike unknown. May not some one be ready to cry out, "O that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone upon my tabernacle." But if such be the effects produced on the minds of those, who, for many years, perhaps, were favoured with the best religious advantages, until a store of scriptural knowledge was laid up, and their characters in some degree formed; how much more injurious must such destitution be to the young, who are utter strangers to those advantages! Many of you, probably, in deciding on the momentous question of emigration, were mainly influenced by the desire of making a more adequate provision for your children, than you expected to do in the old country. But if your solicitude for their temporal prosperity, has placed them out of reach of the means of grace, and exposed them to the deadening, stupifying influence of worldly pursuits, in combination with the still more powerful seductions of corrupt and irreligious society, how little thanks do they owe you for your parental kindness! And should the natural and usual consequence follow, that they spend their life at a distance from God, and perhaps become contaminated with the fashionable vices that are practised around them, and finally, be hardened in unbelief and impenitence, how can you think to meet them at the judgment-seat of Christ?

We beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of the Lord, to watch against the perils of your present situation. The world is an insidious and dangerous foe. "Ye cannot serve two masters." "They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts." If you would not, therefore, imitate the profane Esau, who sold his birth-right for a morsel of bread—if you would not prosecute your secular avocations under the frown of the Almighty—if you would not have your table turned into a trap and a snare for your souls, do not suffer the things of time to gain the supremacy in your bosoms. "Take heed, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life." If the pub-

lic means of grace are deficient, there is so much the more need that you search the scriptures with unceasing care. "*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.*" It cannot possibly contribute, either to your health or outward prosperity, to rob HIM on whom you every moment depend, and who is the bountiful Bestower of every good gift. If you cannot assemble with any christian congregation, to wait on the public services of the sanctuary, let each head of a family have a church in his own house. Suffer not your children to spend, in carnal indulgences, the day which you would be ashamed to devote to secular business. Be more solicitous to guard the sanctity of the Sabbath, than to protect your crops from the ravages of the cattle.

There is a trite proverb, which, when properly understood, conveys an important and useful lesson: *God helps them*, it is said, *who help themselves*. If the maxim should be understood as implying, that a man's destiny is of his own making, then we hold it to be not only false, but impious. But on the other hand, it is a most important truth, that God does not put forth his power in behalf of those who are sunk in apathy and indolence, but for those who diligently use the means which he has appointed. When the divine Redeemer was about to commence his public ministry, his herald was sent before him to publish this high command, "*Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert an highway for our God.*" If we judge rightly, brethren, this is just the duty to which you are now especially called. We confidently believe, that the time is approaching, when the exalted Messiah shall ride in triumph throughout the whole extent of Canada, from one end of the land to the other. Its mighty rivers, and boundless forests; its protracted winters, and accumulated snows, will present no effectual barriers to his progress. "His arrows shall be sharp in the hearts of his enemies; therefore the people shall be subdued under him." "A willing people shall come to him in the day of his power." But it is no presumption to affirm, because both the testimony of Scripture, and the history of past dispensations, furnish ground for the affirmation, that whether this event shall take place at an earlier or more distant period, is inseparably connected with the measures that shall be adopted, and the efforts that shall be made, by the Canadians themselves.

You may, perhaps, feel inclined to put the question, '*What can we do for promoting the progress of the gospel in Canada? Are there any means to that end in our power?*' Our limits will not permit us to go into detail, in specifying what we conceive to be in your power; but we would beg your attention, while we offer a few hints for your consideration.

1. The first thing we would recommend to you, although it may possibly appear to be remotely connected with the object in view, is, that you should *cherish in your minds constantly, a high sense of the superlative value and importance of the instituted ordinances of divine grace*. If this be wanting, and there is no small danger that it should be extremely weakened, if not absolutely destroyed, by a long continuance of religious privations, it is most unlikely, that any vigorous efforts will be employed for the acquisition of privileges that are held of no account.

2. We would, in the next place, recommend, *that you be importunate in your prayers to God, in regard to this very matter*. The exalted

Redeemer gives much encouragement to present such petitions. When he beheld the multitudes of the Jewish people, who, on account of the unfaithfulness, and incompetency of their religious instructors, were regarded by him as "sheep having no shepherd," he had compassion on them, and thus addressed his disciples: "the harvest, truly, is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest." Are not the description and the command equally applicable to your condition? In all your supplications, therefore, in the family, and in the closet, forget not to beseech God, that he will remember the destitute condition of Canada, —that he may speedily send to it, "pastors according to his own heart," who shall search out the scattered multitudes, bring them into the fold of the good shepherd, and lead them to the green pastures of his word.

3. We would, in the third place, recommend *that those who feel the importance of religion, and are truly desirous of living near to God, should associate together in stated meetings, for reading the Scriptures, for prayer, and christian conference.* A blessing from on high has often rested on meetings of this description. "They that feared the Lord *spake often one to another*; and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." "Wherever TWO or THREE are met together in my name," saith Christ, "there am I in the midst of them." A more explicit warrant for such meetings, or more animating encouragement to constitute and frequent them, cannot be expressed. In the absence of public ordinances, a portion of the Lord's day might be spent in this manner very profitably, by a few christians who can walk together in unity. And the advantage derived from them would be still more decided, if, in addition to the meeting on Sabbath, a small portion of one day in a week, or even of a day out of two weeks, were set apart to similar exercises. The knowledge of divine truth is thus kept fresh in the mind, and the sacred fire of christian charity is stirred up and nourished. But, besides all the other advantages that may be expected to arise from this observance, we can assure you by experience, that a meeting of this kind frequently proves the germ of a flourishing congregation. As he who plants an acorn has done something towards the production of an oak, so he who is instrumental in setting on foot a fellowship meeting in the midst of a population destitute of public ordinances, will frequently have the satisfaction of finding, that he has had the honour of laying the foundation of a regular congregation in that community.

4. Finally, we would offer our advice, that while your *supreme dependence* in this, as in every other enterprise, should be on God, and the exalted Mediator; your *next* should be *on your own exertions*. For some time to come, it will probably be a matter of unavoidable necessity, that ministers should be sent to you by churches existing in other lands. But in regard to the *support* of those who labour among you, we have the firmest persuasion, that *wherever it is practicable, it should be chiefly or entirely furnished by yourselves.* We do not overlook the fact, that the British Parliament makes an annual grant of the public money for the advancement of religion in Canada, and were the sum so given, duly and faithfully appropriated, we could not but applaud

the measure, as in accordance with the soundest policy. We also remark with joy, the growing interest which the condition of the Canadians has recently awakened among christians in Britain and Ireland, and the increasing liberality with which funds are supplied for the religious improvement of these provinces. After all that is done, however, or is likely to be done, both by public and private benevolence, we still believe, that Canada must continue to be, comparatively speaking, an uncultivated waste, until its own inhabitants are awakened to some appropriate exertions in providing religious ordinances for themselves. If we are not greatly mistaken in our judgment of *the signs of the times*, every other source of supply will prove INADEQUATE, TEMPORARY, and PRECARIOUS.

Such being our convictions, you will not deem it unsuitable for us to throw out the following suggestion, which, although we do not intend to press it, we regard as of extreme importance. "We speak as to wise men, judge ye what we say." Our proposal is this; that in every little community, unprovided with a gospel minister, measures should be adopted without delay for establishing a fund expressly for religious purposes. By common consent, a general meeting of the families of a particular district might be held, to make all necessary arrangements. Some person held in general esteem, could be chosen as treasurer, others might be appointed as collectors to take up monthly or quarterly subscriptions, from all who should concur in the design, as they had the heart or the ability to give. Many of you have been accustomed to bear the expenses of your own religious institutions in your native country. Others have been contributors to one or more of the religious societies of the present day. Why remit your exertions *now*, when they are so necessary for your own benefit, and for the benefit of your children? The existence of such a fund would be advantageous in many respects. It would enable the inhabitants of any district to engage a preacher for a limited time,—even where the resources were not sufficient to support a fixed pastor. It might prove a great encouragement, and often afford substantial aid, in erecting places of public worship where they should be required. The very effort to establish such a fund, would have a beneficial tendency. It would preserve from oblivion the important principle, that it is the duty of every man to consecrate some portion of his substance to the service of the Lord; and, by the divine blessing, it might be of essential use, as an antidote against that coldness and apathy about religion, which so generally flow from the want of public ordinances. In accomplishing an object so important, sacrifices must be made, and difficulties must be encountered. But "if there be first a willing mind," you will not shrink from sacrifices, in a case which involves so deeply your own spiritual improvement and that of your children for generations to come. Let it not be forgotten, that of those persons in your native country who feel for your privations, and are generously contributing of their substance for your relief, the great majority are just in the same circumstances,—and struggling with the same difficulties from which you sought an escape, by emigration. We trust you have not been disappointed in your hope of improving your condition, and there is no proposition of the truth of which we are more certain than of this,—that your *prosperity will never be impaired by*

your liberality in the service of God. If it is the duty of your brethren at home to "care for your souls," much more surely is it your own duty. If their poverty does not exempt them from obligations to bestow a portion of their scanty earnings for the purpose of sending you the gospel; what excuse could possibly be made for a miserable and fatal parsimony on your part, to whose labours a new country yields a much richer return? How could you defend it to your own children? How could you defend it at the judgment-seat of Christ?

"And now, brethren, we commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them who are sanctified."

Signed by appointment of the Committee on Missions,

STEWART BATES.

